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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/763,182	01/26/2004	Yohichiroh Matsuno	248143US2	6515
22850 7590 12/31/2007 OBLON, SPIVAK, MCCLELLAND MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C. 1940 DUKE STREET ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314			EXAMINER TIMBLIN, ROBERT M	
			ART UNIT 2167	PAPER NUMBER
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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

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AK

Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/763,182	Applicant(s) MATSUNO ET AL.	
	Examiner Robert M. Timblin	Art Unit 2167	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 12 October 2007.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) See Continuation Sheet is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7, 19-21, 25-31, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62-66, 77-79, 81, 83-88, 100, 103, 105, 111, 113, 116, 119, 121 and 124 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Continuation of Disposition of Claims: Claims pending in the application are 1-7, 19-21, 25-31, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62-66, 77-79, 81, 83-88, 100, 103, 105, 111, 113, 116, 119, 121 and 124.

DETAILED ACTION

This office action corresponds to application 10/763,182 filed 1/26/2004.

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 10/12/2007 has been entered.

Response to Amendment

Applicant's amendments have been entered. In the amendment filed herein:

Claims 1-3, 19-21, 25-28, 31, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 63, 65, 77-79, 81, 83, 84, 86, 100, 103, 105, 111, 113, 116, 119, 121, and 124 have been amended.

Claims 8-18, 22-24, 32-43, 45, 47, 51, 53, 55, 57, 59, 61, 67-76, 80, 82, 89-99, 101, 102, 104, 106-110, 112, 114, 115, 117, 118, 120, 122, and 123 have been cancelled.

Accordingly, claims 1-7, 19-21, 25-31, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62-66, 77-79, 81, 83-88, 100, 103, 105, 111, 113, 116, 119, 121 and 124 remain pending.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 56, 58, and 60 recite the limitation "the method comprising" in the last line of the preamble of the claims. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Claims 1-7, 19-21, 25-31, 62-66, 77-81, 83-86 and 124 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claims include a "means" in an apparatus that may be directed towards software *per se*. Specifically, if the "means" can be interpreted as software (i.e. a program listing), the aforementioned claims are functional descriptive material, and thus not statutory. The "means" in these claims must clearly indicate hardware as to make an apparatus claim statutory. See MPEP 2106.01.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claims 1-7, 19-21, 25-31, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62-66, 77-79, 81, 83-88, 100, 103, 105, 111, 113, 116, 119, 121 and 124 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by McFadden (U.S. Patent Application 2003/0126137). In the cited paragraphs, figures and drawing references, McFadden teaches:

With respect to claim 1, a merge information providing apparatus comprising:

a plurality of means (figures 1, 7; spokes) for providing information items (0030; e.g. user records) regarding a user (abstract; i.e. individuals, 0015; i.e. users and members), each of the plurality of means (figures 1, 7; spoke computers) for providing user information items (0030; e.g. user records) including different user information items (0042; i.e. "...the user records may be completely different and correspond for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke computer or domain or enterprise within such spoke computer resides) regarding said user (abstract; i.e. individuals and 0015; i.e. users and members); and

means for acquiring (14, 34, master group database) said different user information items (paragraphs 0037-0038 and 0224) regarding said user (36) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (figures 1, 7; spokes) and merging (0089, integrating into a common directory database) said acquired different user information items (0042; i.e. user records of different groups) regarding said user

(paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; i.e. addition and inclusion of users into groups).

With respect to claim 2 and similar claim 26, the merge information providing apparatus of as claimed in claim 1, wherein said merge information providing apparatus comprises:

user information acquisition means for acquiring said different information items (0042) regarding said user from each of said plurality of user information providing means (paragraphs 0037, 0114 and figure 1, drawing reference 12); and

user information merging means for merging said different information items regarding said user acquired in said user information acquisition means (figure 1 and paragraphs 0045-0047, 0089, 0169, and 0064).

With respect to claim 3 and similar claim 27, the merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein said user information acquisition means acquires said different information items regarding said user (0042) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (figure 1, i.e. spoke computers) by using first use permission information (0012, using an access control list) permitting the use of each of said plurality of user information providing means (paragraph 0064).

With respect to claim 4 and similar claim 28, the merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 3, further comprising use permission information

acquisition means (0069, accepting a password input and 0108, authorization of a member of each group) for acquiring said first use permission information from each of said plurality of user information providing means (figures 5 and 8 and 0069; hub or spoke administrator authorization).

With respect to claim 5 and similar claim 29, the merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising use permission information creation means for creating second use permission information that permits the use of said merge user information providing means (0069-0073).

With respect to claim 6 and similar claim 30, the merge information providing apparatus of the claim 5, wherein said use permission information creation means creates said second use permission information including said first use permission information by using said first use permission information (0030, 0178 and 0245).

With respect to claim 7 and similar claims 31, 66, and 87, the merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising means for setting up each of said plurality of user information providing means according to a request (0060, 0062, 0067 and figure 5; creating a spoke).

With respect to claim 19 and similar claim 58, an information providing apparatus comprising:

means for providing a plurality of different information items regarding a designated user (0080) in response to a request from a merge user information providing means (32,42),

wherein said merge user information providing apparatus (figure 7 and drawing references 32, 34, 42, 44) includes said user information providing means (figures 1, 7; spokes) and other user information providing means (figure 7 and drawing references 32, 34, 42, 44) as subordinate user information providing means (18, 32, 42), to said merge user information providing means (drawing references 12, 14), each of the other user information providing means (figures 1, 7; spokes) including different information items regarding the designated user (0042; i.e. "...the user records may be completely different and correspond for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke computer or domain or enterprise within such spoke computer resides) regarding said user (abstract; i.e. individuals and 0015; i.e. users and members).

With respect to claim 20, the information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 19, wherein said user information providing means further comprises means for saving said plurality of different information items (0042) regarding said user (0003, 0030-0032, and figures 3 and 7; user records).

With respect to claim 21, the information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 19, wherein said plurality of different information items (0042) regarding said user include user information (32, 42, 0032; i.e. records) and/or group information (i.e.

membership information) of a group to which said user belongs (34 44), and wherein said group information includes user information and/or group information of other user information providing means (0029, 0064, and figure 9).

With respect to claim 25, McFadden teaches this claim substantially the same as claim 1. Furthermore, McFadden teaches a means for transmitting a setup request regarding a set up of each said plurality of user information providing means (0060-0064, and figure 5; establishing a spoke).

With respect to claim 44, a merge information providing method in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus (drawing references 12,14, 50) including a plurality of means for providing information regarding a user (Figures 1, 7, drawing references 16, 32, and at least paragraph 0064), said method comprising the steps of:

acquiring said different user information items (36) regarding said user from user information providing means (paragraphs 0037 and 0224); and

providing said acquired information regarding said user with merging (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups).

With respect to claim 46, this claim is essentially similar to claim 19 and therefore the according rejection rationale is applied

With respect to claim 48, a managing method in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including a plurality of means providing information items regarding a user as subordinate user information providing means, said method comprising the steps of:

acquiring said different user information items (0042) regarding said user (abstract; i.e. individuals, 0015; i.e. users and members) from said user information providing means (paragraphs 0037 and 0224);

merging (0089) said acquired user information items (user records) regarding said user (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups); and

transmitting a set up request of said user information providing means (0060, 0062, 0067 and figure 5; creating a spoke).

With respect to claim 50, a computer-implemented method for providing merge information in merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including a plurality of means for providing information items regarding a user, said method comprising the steps of:

acquiring different user information items (0042; i.e. "...the user records may be completely different and correspond for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke computer or domain or enterprise within such spoke computer resides) regarding said user (abstract; i.e. individuals and 0015; i.e. users and

members) from user information items providing means (spoke computers, and paragraphs 0037 and 0224); and

merging (0089) said acquired different user information items regarding said user (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups).

With respect to claim 52, a computer-implemented method of providing information in a user information providing apparatus, said user information providing apparatus including a means for providing information regarding a user, said method comprising:

providing, in response to a request from a merge user information providing apparatus (32,42) comprising including said user information items providing means and other user information items providing means (figure 7 and drawing references 32, 34, 42, 44), a plurality of different information items (0042) regarding a designated user to said merge user information providing apparatus (0080).

With respect to claim 54, a computer-implemented method of managing information in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including a plurality of means for providing user information items regarding a user as subordinate user information providing means, said method comprising the steps of:

acquiring different user information items regarding said user from each of said plurality of user information items providing means (paragraphs 0037 and 0224);

merging (0089) said acquired different user information items regarding said user (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups); and

transmitting a set up request for a set up of said user information providing means (0060-0064, and figure 5; establishing a spoke).

With respect to claim 56, a processor-readable medium storing program code for providing merge information in merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including a plurality of means for providing information regarding a user, said method comprising the steps of:

acquiring different user information items (0042) regarding said user from user information providing means (paragraphs 0037 and 0224); and

merging (0089, drawing reference 38) said different acquired user information items regarding said user (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups).

With respect to claim 60, a processor-readable medium storing program code for managing information in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including a plurality of means for providing user information items regarding a user as subordinate user information providing means, said method comprising the steps of:

acquiring different user information items (0042) regarding said user (abstract; i.e. individuals, 0015; i.e. users and members) from each of said plurality of user information items providing means (spoke computers and paragraphs 0037 and 0224);

merging (0089) said user acquired information regarding said user (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups); and

transmitting a set up request for a set up of said plurality of user information items providing means (0060, 0062, 0067 and figure 5; creating a spoke).

With respect to claim 62, a merge information providing apparatus comprising:

A plurality of (16, 32) means for providing user information (42, 32) regarding a user (36),

means for acquiring (drawing reference 14) a first user (abstract; i.e. individuals, 0015; i.e. users and members) information item (i.e. user record) regarding a user registered to one of said user information providing means (0080) of which use is permitted (0065; a user that is registered to a spoke computer); and

means for acquiring a second user information (0056; i.e. user record from another (group) spoke computer) regarding the same user registered to other user information item providing means (spoke computers of figure 1), without distinguishing (0081, 38) the user as to whether or not the use of said information item providing means is permitted, said merge information providing apparatus merging said acquired first and second user information items regarding said user (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups).

With respect to claim 63, the merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 62, further comprising:

means for managing distinction information that distinguishes said user registered to said user information providing means (0056);

means for acquiring said first and second (0056; i.e. a particular user may be a member of several groups) user information regarding said user from said user information items providing means (spoke computers, figure 1); and

means for merging (0089, drawing reference 34) said first and second user information items regarding said user (0056; i.e. a particular user may be a member of several groups) acquired in said user information acquisition means (figure 1 and paragraphs 0045-0047, 0089, 0169, and 0064).

With respect to claim 64, the merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 63, wherein said distinction information managing means provides said distinction information of said same user to said user information acquisition means in response to a request from said user information acquisition means (0056, identifying group membership).

With respect to claim 65, the merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 62, wherein said user information acquisition means acquires said first and second user information items (0056; i.e. a particular user may be a member of several

groups) regarding said user from said user information providing means by using permission (0112) information that permits the use of said distinction information and said user information providing means (0069, drawing reference 218).

With respect to claim 77, an information providing apparatus comprising:

means for providing information items regarding a user, said user information providing means corresponding to a distinction information that distinguishes (0056) said user registered to said information providing means and/or other user information providing apparatus (spoke computers) to merge user information providing means (0089 and drawing reference 14) in response to a request (0045; i.e. a synchronization task) from said merge user information providing apparatus (0030), said merge user information providing apparatus (12, 14) including said user information (32) providing means and other user information items providing means (34), said user information providing means (spoke computers) and other user information providing means including different information items (0042; i.e. "...the user records may be completely different and correspond for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke computer or domain or enterprise within such spoke computer resides) regarding said user (abstract; i.e. individuals and 0015; i.e. users and members).

With respect to claim 78, the information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 77, further comprising means for saving said different information items regarding the user (0003, 0030-0032, and figures 3 and 7; user records).

With respect to claim 79, the information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 77, wherein said information items regarding said user includes user information and/or group information of a group to which said user belongs, said group information including user information and/or group information of other user information providing means (0029, 0064, and figure 9).

With respect to claim 81, the information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 78, wherein said user information items providing means further comprises means for saving said information regarding to said user (0003, 0030-0032, and figures 3 and 7; user records).

With respect to claim 83, a managing apparatus, comprising:

a merge information providing apparatus (figure 1, drawing reference 14) including a plurality of means for providing (spoke computers) user information items regarding a user (0030; e.g. user records), each of the plurality of means (figures 1, 7; spoke computers) for providing user information items (0030; e.g. user records) including different user information items (0042; i.e. "...the user records may be completely different and correspond for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke computer or domain or enterprise within such spoke computer resides) regarding said user (abstract; i.e. individuals and 0015; i.e. users and members); and

means for transmitting information items regarding set up of said subordinate user information providing means (figure 1),

means for acquiring said different user information items regarding a user registered (0080) to the user information providing means (figure 7 and drawing references 32, 34, 42, 44) of which use is permitted and the same user registered to other user information providing means, without distinguishing (0081, 38) the user by the user information providing means of which use is permitted, said merge information providing apparatus merging said acquired information regarding said user (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups).

With respect to claim 84, the managing apparatus as claimed in claim 83, comprising:

means for managing distinction information that distinguishes whether said user is registered to said user information providing means (0056);

means for acquiring a plurality of different user information items (0042) regarding said user (0015) from said user information providing means (paragraphs 0037, 0114 and figure 1); and

means for merging said plurality of different user information items regarding said user acquired in said user information acquisition means (figure 1 and paragraphs 0045-0047, 0089, 0169, and 0064).

With respect to claim 85, the managing apparatus as claimed in claim 84, wherein said distinction information managing means provides said distinction information of said same user to said user information acquisition means in response to a request from said user information acquisition means (0056, identifying group membership)..

With respect to claim 86, the managing apparatus as claimed in claim 84, wherein said user information acquisition means (drawing reference 14) acquires said plurality of different user information items (0042) regarding said user (0015) from said user information providing means by using permission information that permits the use of said distinction information and said user information providing means (0069, drawing reference 218).

With respect to claim 88, the managing apparatus as claimed in claim 83, further comprising means for displaying a screen for setting up said merge user information providing means and said subordinate user information providing means (0050).

With respect to claim 100, a merge user information providing method in merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing including a plurality of means for providing user information items regarding a user, comprising the steps of:

acquiring a plurality of different information items (0042) regarding a user (0015) registered (0065, a user registered to a spoke computer) to said user information providing means (16, 32) of which use is permitted and the same user registered (0065) to other user information items providing means (spoke computers), without distinguishing said user by whether or not the use of said user information providing means is permitted (0081, 38); and

merging said acquired plurality of different user information items regarding said user (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups).

With respect to claim 103, an information providing method in a user information providing apparatus, said user information providing apparatus including means for providing information items regarding a user, comprising the step of:

providing, in response to a request from a merge user information providing apparatus (12, 14), said merge user information providing apparatus (12, 14) including said user information items providing means and other user information items providing means, a plurality of different information items (0042) regarding a user (0015) corresponding to distinction information (0056; distinguishing users) registered to said user information providing means and/or other user information items providing means for distinguishing said user to said merge user information providing apparatus (0030-0032, 0056, 0064, 0087 and figures 7-8).

With respect to claim 105, a managing method in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing including a plurality of means for providing user information items regarding a user, comprising the steps of:

acquiring a plurality of different information items (0042) regarding a user (0015) registered to said user information items providing means (spoke computers) of which use is permitted and the same user registered (0065; a user registered to a spoke computer) to other user information items providing means (figure 1, spoke computers), without distinguishing said user by whether or not the use of said user information items providing means is permitted (paragraphs 0045, 0081, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups);

merging (0089, drawing reference 14) said acquired plurality of different user information items regarding said user (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups); and

transmitting a request regarding setup of said subordinate information providing means (0060-0064, and figure 5; establishing a spoke).

With respect to claim 111, a computer-implemented information providing method in a user information providing apparatus, said user information providing means providing information items regarding a user, comprising the step of:

providing, in response to a request from merge user information providing apparatus (12, 14), said merge user information providing apparatus (32,42) including said user information items providing items means (32, 42) and other user information

items providing means (figures 1, 7, drawing references 16, 32, and at least paragraph 0064) a plurality of different information items regarding (0042) a user corresponding to distinction information (0056) registered (0065) to said user information items providing means (spoke computer) and/or other user information providing means for distinguishing (0081) said user to said merge user information providing apparatus (0030).

With respect to claim 113, a computer-implemented managing method in merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including means for providing user information items regarding a user, comprising the steps of:

acquiring a plurality of different information items (0042) regarding a user registered (0065) to said user information items providing means (spoke computers) of which use is permitted and the same user registered (0065) to other user information items providing means, without distinguishing said user by whether or not the use of said user information items providing means is permitted (paragraphs 0045, 0081, 0089, 0169, and 0064);

merging said acquired plurality of different user information items (0042) regarding said user (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups); and

transmitting a request regarding setup of said information providing means (0060, 0062, 0067 and figure 5; creating a spoke).

With respect to claim 116, a processor-readable medium storing a program code for providing merge user information in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including a plurality of means for providing user information items regarding a user, comprising the steps of:

acquiring a plurality of different information items (0042) regarding a user (0015) registered (0065) to said user information providing means (16, 32) of which use is permitted and the same user registered to other user information items providing means (spoke computer), without distinguishing said user by whether or not the use of said user information items providing means is permitted (paragraphs 0045, 0081, 0089, 0169, and 0064; and

merging said acquired plurality of different information regarding said user (0042) with merging (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups).

With respect to claim 119, a processor-readable medium for providing information in user information providing apparatus, said user information providing apparatus including means for providing information items regarding a user, comprising the step of:

providing, in response to a request from merge user information items providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus (12, 14) including said user information items providing means (32, 42, 16) and other user information items

providing means (figures 1, 7, drawing references 16, 32, and at least paragraph 0064), information regarding a user (user records) corresponding to distinction information registered (0065) to said user information providing means and/or other user information providing means for distinguishing said user to said merge user information providing apparatus (0030-0032, 0056, 0064, 0087 and figures 7-8).

With respect to claim 121, a processor-readable medium for managing information in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including a plurality of means for providing user information regarding a user, comprising the steps of:

acquiring a plurality of different information items (0042) regarding a user (0015) registered to said user information item providing means (spoke computers) of which use is permitted and the same user registered to other user information items providing means (figure 1, spoke computers), without distinguishing said user by whether or not the use of said user information items providing means is permitted (paragraphs 0045, 0081, 0089, 0169, and 0064);

merging said acquired plurality of different user information items regarding said user with merging (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; addition and inclusion of users into groups); and

transmitting a request regarding setup of said information item providing means (0060-0064, and figure 5; establishing a spoke).

With respect to claim 124, A merge information providing apparatus, comprising:
means for receiving an acquisition request (0045, last 3 lines) for access for a user (0069) to an information provider (0069) of a plurality of information providers (figure 1);

means for acquiring user a plurality of different user information items (0112) regarding the user from the plurality of information providers (figure 1) based on the acquisition request (0112; permission request); and

means for merging (0089) the acquired plurality of different user information items (paragraphs 0045, 0089, 0169, and 0064; i.e. addition and inclusion of users into groups) into merged user information (drawing reference 36).

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 10/12/2007 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

The Applicant argues (see pages 21-27 of the remarks) that McFadden fails to disclose acquiring different user information items regarding a user form each of a plurality of user information providing means and merging the acquired different user information items regarding said user. The Examiner respectfully disagrees given the following:

In a distributed environment for managing dynamic groups, McFadden teaches a system comprising hub and spoke computers each containing a group database (34,

44) and a user database (32, 42) containing user records (36, 46). The Examiner submits that the spoke computers in McFadden's distributed environment each contain respective user records according to the spoke computer that contains the user's record. See McFadden, paragraph 0045 "...Maintaining synchronization between the respective user and group records on hub and spoke computers as well as updating group memberships to reflect changes mad to the user records in the user databases.

Further, McFadden teaches the user records 46 may be completely different and correspond to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke computer or domain or enterprise within which such spoke computer resides. In this respect, the Examiner submits that McFadden describes maintaining a user's group information on several spoke computers (means for providing user information), and that the user's information from each spoke computer corresponds to that particular spoke computer. In other words, the Examiner submits that a user's record on one spoke computer may be different than that user's record stored on a separate spoke computer. Thus, a user having multiple records residing on their corresponding spoke computer teaches a means for providing (i.e. a spoke computer that provides user records) user information items including different user information (i.e. the user's records from each of the spoke computers).

The Examiner submits that maintaining multiple user records corresponding to a particular spoke or domain or enterprise (i.e. different user information items) is a goal of McFadden. In paragraph 0014, McFadden seeks to provide greater flexibility, adaptivity, and extensibility for groups comprising large numbers of individuals and/or

spanning multiple domains or enterprises. One way of achieving this goal is to manage *employees that may participate in a large number of different groups* that span different aspects of an employee's standing within an enterprise (abstract and 0009). By at least this teaching, it is seen that the users registered a spoke computer (i.e. that represent a particular enterprise or domain, 0042, McFadden) may as well be registered in other spoke computers and domains. Because a user's record corresponds to that domain or spoke computer, a user therefore has different user information items and a plurality of means for providing user information items.

In addition, McFadden teaches the merging of this information in at least the teaching of their hub computer containing a master group database (34) that maintain information about the various groups found in system 12, figure 1 (also in McFadden, paragraph 0039). It is submitted that McFadden teaches maintaining users and groups in various spoke computers to integrate (i.e. merge) that information into a common directory (McFadden at 0089). In another interpretation, McFadden teaches an automated synchronization method (paragraph 0016) changes made in spoke computers will be kept in synchronization between the hub and target (i.e. spoke) computers. By way of using such a synchronization process, McFadden describes a merge operation (i.e. the new information present in the spoke computers will be essentially merged with the hub computer in an effect to bring the hub computer current). Therefore, in this interpretation, the data contained in the hub computer can as well be seen as merge information.

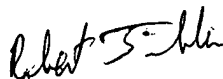
Contact Information

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Robert M. Timblin whose telephone number is 571-272-5627. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8:00-4:30.


If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John R. Cottingham can be reached on 571-272-7079. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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